

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
2215 WEST OLD SHAKOPEE ROAD
HENNEPIN COUNTY, MINNESOTA 55431

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Approved Minutes
Joint Council/HRA/France & Old Shakopee Road
Advisory Committee Meeting
Meeting #11a

5:30 p.m.
May 7, 2001
Council Chamber

Call to Order Mayor Gene Winstead called the meeting to order and began with introductions.

Roll Call *City Council & Staff:* Mayor Winstead, Councilmembers D. Abrams, M. Fossum, H. Harden, A. Ornat <arrived at 5:45 p.m.>, S. Peterson, and V. Wilcox.

City Manager Mark Bernhardson, City Attorney Dave Ornstein, and HRA Administrator Regina Harris.

HRA: Steven Rudolph, Chair and Mark Schneider, Vice Chair

France & Old Shakopee Road Advisory Committee: Ron Krause (Southwest Business Tenants), Larry Granger (Southwest Residents), Larry Klement (Southwest Property Owners), Mark Foreman (Northeast Business Owners), Lloyd Heitzman (Northeast Business Tenants), Pamela Ashling (Northeast Homeowners), and Paula Schmitz (Northwest Business Tenants)

Public Comment Period The Public Comment Period is not open during special meetings.

Winstead explained that the purpose of the meeting is for the France and Old Shakopee Road Advisory Committee to bring the Council and staff up to date on their progress regarding the redevelopment process in that area. He stated that it is an open meeting but that no public testimony would be heard.

Krause explained that the charter of the France and Old Shakopee Road Advisory Committee provides that it communicate with the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) and the City Council on an ongoing basis. He proceeded with an overview of the Committee's progress to date. He stated that they conducted outreach surveys, reviewed the methods and findings, reviewed the charter and the next steps, received Council input regarding their direction, and are requesting Council's input tonight and will be requesting an extension of their deadline. He stated that the Committee began work on November 28, 2000, developed a communication plan, reviewed the Comprehensive Plan, received a presentation by the City and the County regarding the suggested road improvements in the France and Old Shakopee Road area, developed a community outreach program, conducted phone surveys, encountered consumers one-on-one, held focus groups with property owners, tenants, and residents for all of the quadrants at France and Old Shakopee Road, and have compiled the results of the outreach data collected.

He stated that the following conclusions resulted from the surveys: overall satisfaction with the mix of retail in the area, traffic is a problem, appearance of the abandoned gas stations is the most negative feature, desire for preservation of existing neighborhoods, lack of green space and landscaping, and most business property owners are open to working with the Committee on long-range plans for the area. He continued to describe the challenges the Committee has determined must be addressed: traffic improvements, pedestrian and bike safety, aesthetics, long-term comprehensive plan that works with existing property owners and business tenants, and preservation of existing residential neighborhoods.

Larry Granger described two activities that will be going on during May and June: 1) Exploring alternative traffic improvements and 2) Developing background on the neighborhood, visiting developments in other communities, and reviewing public and private financial tools available for rehabilitation and redevelopment. He explained how the Committee anticipates proceeding with the number one issue of traffic through the City's Public Works Department and Hennepin County. He stated that Old Shakopee Road is currently carrying approximately 23,000-26,000 vehicles per day, therefore, it is similar to that of a state highway, not unlike Hwy. 169 that has become more like a freeway. He stated that there is a Hwy. 169 corridor study being conducted from Bloomington down to Mankato. In addition to the amount of traffic, the speed of the traffic is a major concern and the increased truck traffic. The inability to cross the streets in the vicinity of France and Old Shakopee Road with ease is a problem in addition to the accidents that have or will occur in the area. He stated that the access in and out of the businesses at the four corners is a real problem and represents what the residents, business tenants, the City, and the County are all concerned about. He explained that a comprehensive look at traffic issues will take place during June, and in July, the possibilities for the potential of different types of use for the land and properties, using either rehabilitation or redevelopment strategies for both short-term (5-10 years) and long-term (20 years) will be reviewed.

Granger stated that the Committee anticipates providing the traffic study results to the neighborhood residents in July so that they can look at possible alternatives and review the dilemmas. From those discussions, the Committee hopes to gain some insight and ideas regarding retention/rehabilitation of existing properties, new development at one or more corners, or a combination of those alternatives. By August, the Committee should be reviewing many different possibilities so that by September options can be presented to the neighborhood with an eventual recommendation coming to Council following the neighborhood's reaction. He added that the Committee has been well supported by the HRA, the facilitator, and that there are 12 members on the Committee, all of whom have brought good ideas to the discussions.

Winstead inquired if the Committee members are comfortable with the process to date?

<Ornat arrived at 5:45 p.m.>

Granger, representing the southwest quadrant and the one most affected by the previous plan, stated that he believes people would say that the process is fair, open, and is working. He stated that its easy to criticize a proposed development but much harder to determine what should be done instead and that the Committee appreciates the opportunity to do something about it. He added that the traffic problem is not restricted to Bloomington and that Burnsville is experiencing a tremendous increase in traffic on County Road 42 that has resulted in a County Road 42 Corridor Study to see what improvements can be made from Scott County to Dakota County. It was mentioned that perhaps the Traffic and Transportation Advisory Commission (TTAC) might be the appropriate group to look at a study of the Old Shakopee Road corridor in the future.

Fossum inquired of Krause how much more time did the Committee anticipate needing in order to make a recommendation to the Council.

Krause replied that he liked this process much better than the prior one as it gets the community involved up front so everyone knows what direction the neighborhood is interested in going from the beginning. He stated that the Committee anticipates needing until October to come up with a quality solution rather than hurrying the process.

Foreman concurred with Krause that the process is working well and that their only wish is that more citizens would provide input into the process.

Wilcox commented that he was not surprised to hear that traffic was a major concern and stated that the challenge is not coming up with a solution but in finding the budgeting for the solutions. He stated that his only concern with the extension is that it puts a cloud of uncertainty over the heads of business and homeowners and that the frustration of not knowing what will happen to them grows as the time gets extended. He added that it's the unknown for those involved that is difficult to deal with when working on a redevelopment, and for that reason, he would support the Committee expediting the schedule if at all possible.

Peterson agreed that the quality of the process is the most important thing and that it should be allowed to play out to its most logical conclusion without dragging on too long. He stated that given the current and future demographics of Bloomington, the City needs to look at opportunities to provide senior citizens with places to live where they can carry out their independent lives when driving is no longer an option for them. He believes the France and Old Shakopee Road neighborhood could be one of those areas that does accommodate that style of living in Bloomington.

Granger suggested that Old Shakopee Road should perhaps be looked at differently. It's defined as a County arterial but is more like a state highway that intersects the downtown area of a small community. He stated that the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) might be open to making changes appropriate to that definition that could incorporate slower speeds, longer lights, pedestrian crossings, more lighting, etc. He stated that it's important to relay that type of thinking to the agencies involved in the redevelopment of the area. The area must be defined for many different purposes, not just a high-speed arterial to get to 35W.

It was stated that the intersection of France and Old Shakopee Road is very unique and could be viewed as another downtown area and that how that is accomplished through the redevelopment process is critical.

Winstead inquired if there were any surprises in the comments provided in the survey.

Granger replied that many individuals expressed an interest for the Valley West Shopping Center to be more completely enclosed with walkways and a gathering point that would lend itself to events, etc. There was public interest in creating a public gathering space at the shopping center and that the opposite is actually happening now with the walkways being eliminated as tenants move out. He added that in the 1960s, a library was proposed to be a part of the Valley West area, however, the idea never came to be as the County cut back the libraries to two in Bloomington. Some respondents would actually like to see a food court in the Valley West Shopping Center where people could come to a common sitting area with a variety of food choices.

Winstead commented that many of the amenities that the residents are requesting at Valley West now were actually there years ago, i.e. drug store with a soda fountain, movie theater, etc. He stated that the reality is that economics plays a large part in determining what businesses work there and if they had all been successful, they would still be there. But times change and economics change.

Granger suggested that the City look at the physical structures that currently occupy the intersection and provide some definition and direction as to how those structures and configurations will be usable over the long-term no matter who occupies them. Configuration of the physical structures and the use of the land at that intersection along with meeting the multiple challenges of traffic from a resident, business, City, and County standpoint are all elements to consider in the design of this plan.

Winstead inquired about the restrictions in that area for issuing a liquor license to a restaurant.

Bernhardson replied that the shopping center is in too close proximity on some corners to Mount Hope Lutheran Church and mentioned that the school might also come into play.

Regina Harris, City's HRA Administrator explained that there is a very small area just east of the Good Year Store that would allow liquor under the current Charter.

Abrams stated that he supports the Committee's request for an extension and thanked the members for the time and energy they're putting into the process and stated that he is looking forward to the finished product.

Fossum stated that he would support an extension to October 1, 2001, and also thanked the group.

Harden was encouraged to hear that the Committee may be taking some field trips to other redevelopment areas for ideas.

Motion was made by Peterson, seconded by Ornat, and all voting aye, to amend the Committee's Charter to extend their deadline to October 1, 2001, to report back to Council.

Wilcox suggested that the Committee send the neighborhood a communication informing them of the extended deadline.

When asked about the extent of the current notification area, Harris replied that the immediate neighborhood plus two blocks beyond the study area (approximately 1,000 homes) currently receive mailings of the meeting notifications and summaries. She suggested that the Council relay their desire to increase the notification area to the Committee members if they so desired.

Abrams inquired as to the status of the budget in relation to the project.

Harris replied that original marketing budget was \$10,000 and that half of that has been spent so far (\$1,800 on the phone survey, \$500 for mailings, and a small amount of the consultant's dollars on the facilitator). She foresees that the existing budget should cover the costs through the concept plan stage.

Fossum inquired as to the Committee's thoughts on the size of the notification area.

Foreman replied that the Committee has extended the borders from the original notification area and is comfortable with the current notification area. Others interested in the process can access the information via the City's web page if they're interested or get on mailing lists. He mentioned a concern he has is that there is one property owner (small strip mall on the northeast corner) who has not communicated with the Committee to date.

Lee mentioned that staff had the same problem with the owner regarding the redevelopment of the Mobile Station and that they were unsuccessful in getting the owner to return their communications.

Foreman's other concern was that the present Committee has not been privy to the previous process, the discussions, and resulting drawings, etc. and that the information might be helpful.

Someone stated that the information was available to the Committee at the first meeting but that Mr. Foreman was absent from that meeting.

Wilcox liked Granger's analogy that Old Shakopee Road is like a highway going through a small town in that area.

Adjourn Meeting

Mayor Winstead adjourned the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

Barbara Clawson
Council Secretary